

When I got in to radio in 1978, I was taught the key to a successful radio station was making a profit. Making a profit came by creating an emotional bond with the listener, making them passionate about their station.

You achieved this by "reflecting life in your community". The idea was to make the listener feel they couldn't turn away or they might miss something that might affect them.

A passionate listener responded to the commercials, producing results for the advertiser.

Radio, I learned, served another purpose. I was taught people counted on their radio station to make them feel safe. They tuned in because they wanted to know their world was safe. This is especially important in the morning, as the listener needed to know what happened while they were asleep.

I know this is real elementary, but even in its simple terms, the plan is flawless. It is localism and an honorable way for a station licensee to conduct themselves.

Listeners are angry, I believe, because they can no longer count on their station for the information they need. The stations do not strive for an emotional bond. Listeners feel displaced, like orphans. A basic need is not met.

Localism isn't what you do minute by minute on the air. Localism is knowing that when Tropical Storm Alison hits Houston and people are swimming out of the freeways to safety their radio station is talking about it, not running Astros baseball as the All News Station was doing.

Localism is serving the emotional need of local listeners. A computer jukebox, satellite feed and voice tracked station does not do this. Listeners know they cannot count on these stations if something happens in their world. I worked at a station in Kerrville, Texas, where all 3 stations were unattended and satellite driven. I rushed to my station for the end of the tornado warning I learned about through a station 100 miles away. I was the only one telling Kerr County and I was 20 minutes late in telling them.

Localism is what radio did (especially the big boys) after 9/11. Localism is what ABC was all about by letting non-affiliates carry their programming free, with no strings attached. The emotional needs of the country and its thousands and thousands of communities were met incredibly well in the aftermath of 9/11.

While I disagree with the big boy mentality of profit above service, I applaud them for this shining example of what radio can be.

Lastly, I want to say my beef with radio is not just those bent on showing an increase in their stock, but the thousands of small market stations where there is little or no alternative, who hook up to a satellite dish 24 hours a day except for 6-8am Monday through Friday. Their lack of localism and timely information is just as bad as a number of voice tracked stations simply saying "there's a

flash flood warning in effect" during Tropical Storm Alison as all the network TV stations dropped all programming and commercials for emergency information 3.5 hours before any radio station did.

Yes, radio need to fix itself. If XM and Sirius build a stronghold on radio, we only have ourselves to blame. I always thought that license on the wall meant we were to SERVE the community we are licensed to. To me, that's putting your community above profits, knowing if you do a superior job, the profits will follow. If this sounds like Gordon McClendon, who owned some of America's most successful radio stations, you're right. I'm a fan of the late McClendon.

Thank you.

Bill Turner